

The Garden Path

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PLANT OF THE MONTH By Marty Finkel

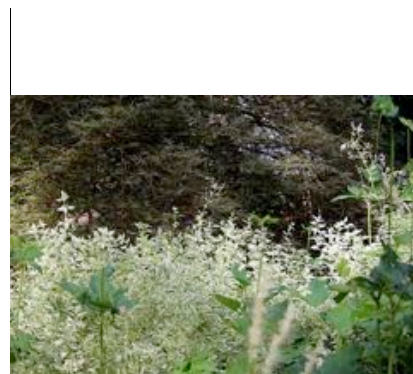
Caryopteris (*Bluebeard*, *Blue mist shrub*), *Caryopteris x clandonensis* and *C. divaricata*.

The major importance and garden interest is in *Caryopteris x clandonensis* because its cultivars are showy, versatile, beautiful, pollinator friendly and are available at most garden centers and nurseries. Some of them are 'Dark Knight,' 'Blue Mist,' 'First Choice,' 'Heavenly Blue,' 'Kew Blue,' 'Longwood Blue,' 'Pink Chablis,' 'Sunshine Blue,' 'Worcester Gold,' and others. The last two have golden leaves, and 'Sunshine Blue' is more compact than 'Worcester Gold,' the leaves of which fade to green in hot summers. They all fill the need for a fine fall performer. The original blue mist shrub was developed by a cross between *C. indica* and *C. mongholica* in 1930, and it was raised in West Clandon, England -- that's how it got its specific epithet.

C. divaricata is an herbaceous perennial native to the Himalayas. According to perennials guru Dr. Allan Armitage, it hardly looks like a caryopteris with its more *Clerodendron*-like flowers and smelly leaves. It has given rise to one of the most beautiful and useful plants for the garden, however -- 'Snow Fairy,' with bright white and green variegated leaves that remain variegated through heat and humidity. Its blue flowers are not showy, but they hardly matter since the 3-4' tall shrub lights up the garden with its leaves. Its width is about 3' at maturity. There may be an occasional stem with green leaves; if this occurs, pull it out by the roots or cut below ground level (otherwise, more will grow until the whole plant reverts to green). Deer do not eat it.

Caryopterises are woody-stemmed perennials, 3-5' tall by 3-6' wide, depending on the cultivar, but a few cultivars are shorter and more compact. They all should be grown in full sun with well-drained soil. They can take the worst of hot summers and still perform well. Most flower from mid-summer well into fall on low-growing, finely textured mounds. They all attract bees, butterflies, and other pollinators and have few problems.

As with other woody-stemmed perennials such as *Artemisia*, *Perovskia*, and *Salvia*, they should NOT be cut back hard until new bud break in the spring. If they start looking ratty in the early winter, give them a hair-cut only. Propagate by terminal cuttings in spring or early summer.



Caryopteris clandonensis 'Ferndown'

Caryopteris divaricata 'Blue Butterflies'

Mass of 'Snow Fairy' with Japanese anemones and Japanese maple

Photos courtesy of JCRA

CHECKLIST By Mary Jane Bosworth

- ✓ Most flowers have now set seeds and they may be collected and saved for the following year. Annuals and biennials are among the easiest to grow from seeds. Some you might want to consider for this project would be: marigolds, zinnias, spider flowers, strawflowers, larkspur, and sunflower. Store seeds in a cool, dry place in a paper envelope or bag.
- ✓ If you will be considering planting spring bulbs for the following year, now is the time to order them, so get out your catalogs or go on-line now.
- ✓ Plant pansies for splashes of winter color.
- ✓ Control winter weeds with a pre-emergent herbicide applied from September 1-15 in shrub and flower beds.
- ✓ Divide and replant overgrown perennials such as hostas, coneflowers and daylilies.
- ✓ Plant spring flowering bulbs in the month of October.
- ✓ This is a good time to get your soil tested for next year's plantings.
- ✓ Clean debris out of your garden. Remove spent annuals and cut the tops of perennials.
- ✓ Bring houseplants indoors when temperatures dip below 50. Give them a good bath with soapy water or spray with insecticidal soap. Move plants to shade for a week to condition them to the lower light levels they will receive when they are returned to the house.

GARDENING ON THE WEB By Carl Shafer

Recently "Garden Rant" (<http://gardenrant.com>) has had a number of interesting posts. Susan Harris on July 29, 2016 posted "Roses without chemicals, After Knock Outs". She introduces Peter Kukielski, former curator of the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden at the New York Botanical Garden. When the city banned the use of pesticides on public lands, his hunt for disease resistant roses led to Germany, where the same pesticides had been banned 20 years earlier. His discoveries and resulting book are discussed. Elizabeth Licata posted on August 4, 2016, "Nobody smells roses any more". More on roses with some references to above.

Thomas Christopher posted on August 1, 2016, "Bug Hunting". He reports on a lecture he attended on insects in your garden. It is estimated that on average less than 3 percent of the insects in a garden actually feed on the plants. The speaker suggested that just as there are bird watchers, gardeners should consider being insect watchers. He reports on a friend's results of regularly watching and photographing insects in his garden. Susan Harris posted on August 12, 2016, "Cornell on Lawn Care; Do Less!" Cornell has a new Turfgrass website and "Lawn Care: The Easiest Steps to an Attractive Environmental Asset". Check it out and compare with the NCSU "TurfFiles" and the Lawns chapter of the Extension Gardener Handbook.

They also have under Friends of Rant, "Suggested Reads". These are often summaries of research reported in the Botany News section of Science Daily. At the end of the summary there is often a link to the actual research publication. If you read these, I think you will appreciate having the summary.

THE TYROS' CORNER By Eileen Novak

There is nothing like seeing your garden through the eyes of a child to make you truly appreciate it. Really! My grandson visits us every summer for a couple of weeks of life in what my daughter calls "NanaPoppaLand" which means lenient bedtimes, all foods he likes cooked, fewer rules and a lot less schoolwork. She was an elementary school teacher and has seen firsthand how the "year-round school" schedule helps children in their studies. I, however, grew up with the joy of a summer vacation free from the three R's and am somewhat lax about making him write in his journal, read his books and do his math on his tablet.

We take our classroom outside and work in the garden. He LOVES to pick things. Two years ago he went out with me and picked all the green cherry tomatoes because he liked them better. Last year, I convinced him that the red ones tasted much better so he was a little more careful. This year he asked about the yellow tomatoes and

was content to wait till there wasn't a bit of green left. Luckily there were new ripe ones every day – those tiny tomatoes put out a LOT of fruit. Thomas also loves to ask questions, which is why I ease up somewhat on the schoolwork. He has remembered most of the things he asks about over the years.

This year, when the questions started, I was unprepared for the big one. We had gone to the farmers market and bought some tomatoes and berries and on the way home, he wanted to know why I don't grow food to sell at the market. At first I wanted to say it was too much work, but that might give him a prejudice against work. Then I thought I should say I don't have enough space. But that's not true either. I settled for "But Thomas, if I had to work a garden to sell food every day, I wouldn't ever be able to visit you in Maryland or take you to Marbles when you visit here!" Yes, I know, a flimsy excuse but he bought it.

This year brought another new visitor to the garden: his younger brother Jake. At 2 ½, Jake is taken with shooting things, playing with the light sabers that Poppa made (from a pool noodle, cut in half, with duct tape marking the handle) and anything outside. The sheer joy those two exude as they run, screaming, from the house to the vegetable garden and back, is infectious. Jake is learning about fruits from his Nana. He loves cherry tomatoes, so this year he got to see them growing, and pick them. Of course, he follows in his brother's footsteps and picks them ALL, green and red and yellow, but it's a start. He was so proud when we served the salad, with the bright red cherry tomatoes, telling everyone he picked them. I think I have a good start with the boys, showing them where food comes from, how it grows and so on, that they will remember and pass on the values.

I'm looking forward to a lot more summers to continue THIS education.

INTERESTING TID-BITS By Marty Finkel

A word to the wise: an interesting item was in the August 13, 2016 News & Observer column "Ask the Gardener," by Mark Weathington, Director of the JC Raulston Arboretum. The question was about the death of four out of eight miniature butterfly bushes that had been thriving and were looking great. They are now in their second summer, which means they should be well-established. The questioner noticed that two looked wilted and then died, followed by the two next to them. Her question was whether to replace them next spring or to plant something different. Weathington's answer was that butterfly bushes need really good drainage and that in his experience the miniatures are more susceptible to wet feet than the larger ones. He noted that they did especially well in containers and on slopes. He commented that this especially wet summer didn't help. So be alerted – if you have or plan to plant the miniature butterfly bushes, be sure the soil drains well, especially if you have clay soil.

Special program at NCBG: The NC Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill is presenting a special program consisting of almost weekly events between now and December 16 called Saving Our Birds. The first part of it was the demonstration of hummingbird banding held on Sunday, August 14. The events are designed to encourage awareness and understanding of North Carolina's native birds as well as to present ways to conserve their habitats. There is an exhibition along with scheduled programs. For information: <http://ncbg.unc.edu/birds> Part of the exhibit is a photograph contest with winning photos displayed from November 1 to January 2 at the botanical garden. There are cash prizes, and the registration deadline is September 30. For more details: ncbg.unc.edu/photocontest

Do peanuts do grow on the roots of the plant as many of us have been told? They do grow underground, but how do they get there? The peanut plant is very interesting in that it sends the pods underground where they form peanuts. The flowers last for a day and self-pollinate, then lose their petals as the fertilized ovaries in the center of the flowers begin to enlarge. The stalks curve downward, pointing the budding ovaries towards the ground. Cells at the base of the ovaries eventually form shoot-like "pegs," and with the new peanut embryos at their tips, the pegs extend into the ground. They turn horizontal and mature. The tips of the pegs take in water and nutrients and swell to form single, wrinkled shells that have 2 – 4 peanuts. A plant will produce about 40 peanut pods before dying. They bloom over a period of several weeks (up to 3 months), so the pods mature at various intervals. Peanuts are legumes along with beans, lentils, peas, etc., and fix nitrogen in the soil. It's very easy to grow them in the home garden – plant April through June in well-drained, sandy soil rich in organic matter. It takes 120 to 150 days for peanuts to form after planting. Instructions can be found on the Internet.

HERB OF THE MONTH By Edna Gaston

We are gardeners – we love flowers, we love herbs. So let's combine them. Here are some of my favorites that grow well in this area.

Monarda didyma – Bee Balm is a great pollinator plant. Now there are many cultivars so the flower choice is diverse – pink, violet, red and white. Red is thriving (and spreading in my garden. It loves the sun, doesn't need a lot of water and requires very little care once established. Periodically divide, good way to pass along plants to friends or establish new beds.

Allium schoenoprasum – What is a baked potato without chives? This plant is very easy to grow, even starting from seed is a breeze. The thin needle-like foliage is different from most plants and the purple flowers are gorgeous. This herb is not fussy. Frequently divide and the more you cut it to enjoy the better it will grow.

Allium tuberosum – Garlic chives has flatter leaves than the more familiar chives but is just as wonderful and tastes just as great. It has beautiful clusters of white flowers. This herb will self-sow.

Thymus – There are so many varieties of thyme and so many flower colors. It's hard to choose a favorite. Perfect as groundcovers or in the ground. This delightful herb will slowly spread and reward the grower with a colorful show.

Salvia officinalis – Sage is an absolute must in the garden. It can be a little temperamental and needs good air circulation. I've found growing in a pot is more successful. The stately purple flowers make an outstanding statement in the garden.

Santolina virens – Green Santolina has a needle like foliage that is topped by yellow balls. Plant in a sunny dry location and stand back – get ready for a show.

These are just a few suggestions. There are many more, each and all beautiful in their own rights. Great as herbs, superb as “ornamentals” to enhance any garden.

Have fun, Happy Gardening!

SOME PICTURES FROM A SHADY YARD By Fern Boyd

August 2016 pictures

Red crape myrtle, english box



Volunteer pink phlox,
volunteer white rose of sharon



Minature crape myrtle, Victor.



Container at foot of front porch
with lavender blooming and germander



Beside front porch mirabilis, common four o'clock from
tuber, with lily of the valley, a fern and of course some weeds.



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